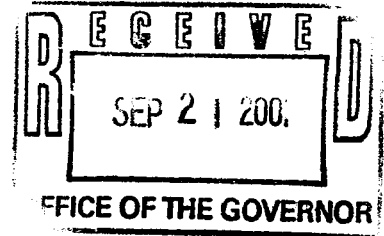


September 18, 2001

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20500



Bill Graves
State of Kansas

Dear Mr. President:

Judy Martz
State of Montana

As Governors of Missouri River Basin states, we would like to take this opportunity to present our thoughts to you on proposed management changes for the Missouri River. These comments come to you with the benefit of years of discussion and collaboration among the Missouri River states to ensure that future management of the river accommodates both the needs of the people in and near the basin and the requirements of the basin's threatened and endangered species.

Mike Johanns
State of Nebraska

The Flood Control Act of 1944 authorized the construction of five multipurpose dams on the main stem of the Missouri River and incorporated an existing dam, Fort Peck in Montana, to serve the water resources needs of the inhabitants of the Missouri River Basin. The operation of the Main Stem Reservoir System by the US Army Corps of Engineers is described in the Missouri River Master Water Control Manual (Master Manual). The Master Manual was first published in 1960, and only minor changes have been made since that time. The drought of the late 1980s and early 1990s raised the questions as to whether the Master Manual reflects the contemporary needs, values and economic realities of the basin. As a result, the Corps decided in 1989 to review its operating manual and asked the basin states acting through the Missouri River Basin Association (MRBA) to assist in this endeavor.

John Hoeven
State of North Dakota

William J. Janklow
State of South Dakota

Jim Geringer
State of Wyoming

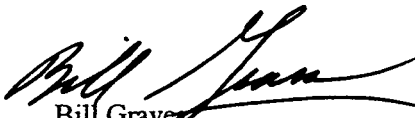
To lead this basin wide effort, the MRBA sponsored four basin-wide constituent conferences, met with small groups of stakeholders in the basin, and held numerous negotiation sessions, all of which were open to and involved the public. The MRBA is a coalition of Governorappointed representatives from each of eight Missouri River Basin states (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming) and the Executive Director of the Mni Sose Tribal Water Rights Coalition. After almost five years of work, the MRBA developed a compromise alternative for the new operating manual for the Missouri River. The MRBA plan called for additional water conservation in the upstream reservoirs during droughts and four steps to help recover the basin's threatened and endangered species (an increase in habitat acquisition and enhancement activities; experimental changes to flows out of Fort Peck Dam in Montana; implementation of a basin-wide monitoring program; and the formation of a basin-wide Recovery Committee). All of the member states, with the exception of Missouri, supported this hard-earned compromise position. The Mni Sose Tribal Water Rights Coalition abstained from voting on the proposal but generally supported its recommendations.

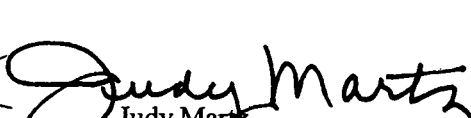
Shortly after the MRBA finalized its recommendations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued its Biological Opinion on the Corps' current operation of the Missouri River and shed new light on the biological science of the river system and the species it supports. The Service stated that additional adjustments to the flows in the lower third of the river would also be needed to preclude jeopardy to the basin's populations of least terns, piping plovers, and pallid sturgeon. The MRBA is currently working with all agencies and river interests to evaluate the Services Biological Opinion along with other potential solutions to the Endangered Species problem. We will continue to seek a solution that will be acceptable to all interests.

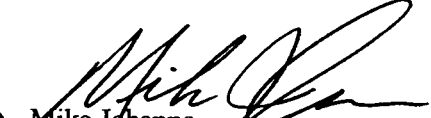
In March 2001, you received a letter from the Governors of several Mississippi River states expressing their concern over future changes to flows in the Missouri River. We certainly support the Mississippi Governors desire to be kept apprised of the Corps' progress in updating its Missouri River Master Manual, and their concern about understanding the impacts of flow changes to their respective states. It is important to recognize, however, that the Missouri River dams are not authorized to provide benefits on the Mississippi River. Nevertheless, MRBA has asked the Corps to evaluate the impacts of each alternative on the Mississippi River. The Corps has done an excellent job of holding hearings in Mississippi River Basin states, evaluating impacts of proposed changes to states outside the Missouri River Basin, and evaluating the impact of future water depletions from the Missouri River.


The Missouri River Basin is in the second year of drought conditions. The MRBA plan attempts to fairly distribute hardships during a drought among all river users. The Corps of Engineers has already been working for 12 years to revise its Missouri River Master Manual. It is time for closure of this process in order to begin implementing needed changes for the basin. We support the need for a thorough analysis of impacts; however additional delays to this lengthy process will not benefit the endangered species or the citizens of the Missouri River Basin. We urge you to support the Corps of Engineers in its effort to rewrite the Master Manual to assure sound management of the Missouri River for the people of the Missouri Basin, and to implement water conservation measures consistent with MRBA's recommendations and existing Corps authorities in the face of our region's continuing drought. Meanwhile, we will continue working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Corps of Engineers to define acceptable changes to the Missouri River Master Manual.

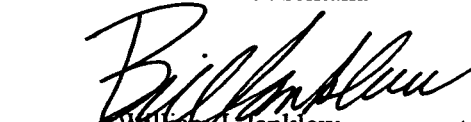
Sincerely,

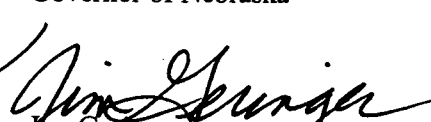

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